

## Kainar

*The sun-baked earth of Kainar expands across the horizon in contrast to the other forests thick with brush and tree. Heat beats at you from the clear sun above, digging into your energy. Even in daytime, Kainar is often a draining place, though the danger now is superficial compared to the beasts that roam at night.*

*Before you stood the spirits of Kainar's innovative solution to these varied problems. Around the Baobab's grand trunk is a clay wall that towers above you, imposingly separating it from the savannah. Wooden supports stand out at regular intervals, breaking up its smooth outer surface into segments. You wander towards one of its open gates, the doorway at least eight times your size. Its reinforced doors, despite looking intimidatingly strong, are welcomingly open.*

*Among all the information you've heard, two locations catch your interest the most: The Museum of Korios, which catalogues all that is known about Kainar and Korios's history, and The Amber Nest, a small cafe that serves as a more relaxed place to learn about the beings that inhabit Kainar and its day-to-day structure.*

### *The Amber Nest*

*Kainar is a place defined by its construction, but inevitably culture grows into the spaces inside and in between their buildings. Inside the myriad shops, homes, and streets of Korios is an atmosphere not only of work but of community and cooperation. Though it's visible anywhere, its clearest display is the various rest spots around Korios' commercial areas that the ever-busy inhabitants flock to for respite.*

*The Amber Nest is one of these many locations. It is mostly unremarkable from the outside, but as you enter, the ambient conversation and relaxed posture within strikes a hard contrast with the activity outside. Inhabitants of all kinds gather here for the pleasure of each other's company rather than a deadline.*

- **Observation of typical social behavior**

- o *Inside the Amber Nest, you see an even mixture of Ruam, Leenis, and spirits. The Ruam's behavior is the very definition of essentialist. The snippets of expertly organized and concise sentences you overhear from them help convey their deeply rooted technical mindset. The Leenis hold an opposite disposition, sitting and conversing casually. They gesture with their paws and arms, meandering in topic and generally enjoying themselves.*

- Between the two is the attitude of the spirits. Some converse with the Ruam on a number of technical subjects while others*

*reminisce over their day so far with the Leenis. In either case, they blend smoothly with the rest of the forest's inhabitants, not perfectly alike yet different in a synergistic manner.*

- Observation of the café's typical Koriosian aesthetics
  - o *The café itself is rich with Korios' visual character. Its furniture more resembles the skeletons that precede buildings than the buildings themselves, fitting among a customer base of mostly construction workers. The interior design seems to field some of Kainar's natural aesthetics. Sharply-pruned prairie bushes sit in corners and in the gaps between tables, adding an element of color and life to the design.*
- Observation of the types of food and drink available
  - o *The Nest's menu is built closely off of raw ingredients, with little in the way of layered or complex recipes. Simple fruit is prominently represented in the café, and you can see it is a popular choice among the busy citizens. The more complete meals are mostly salads with acidic dressings or more savory additions. Flavored fruit and vegetable juices are constantly being mixed in the small work area behind the counter. At what would perhaps be called the heart of the café sits a common sight; a large bowl filled with the energizing and ever abundant seeds of the ecunn nut, an equally large pot of slow boiling water, a large display of ceramic cups, and a small swarm of patrons conversing and freely making use of arrangement.*
- Watching a celebration
  - o *As you make your order and take a seat in an unoccupied table, a huddled mass of Ruam and spirits make their way into the café. They chatter amongst each other in excited yet politely hushed tones. While their attempt not to become a distraction is questionably effective, the spirit behind the Nest's counter receives them with a grin, turning from his current work to receive them. The group makes the necessary exchange before the spirit prepares their orders with a near magical level of elegance and efficiency.*
  - You overhear pieces of their conversation as they take a few tables not far from yours. Their energy seems to be related to the opening or completion of some project in Korios, with relief and fatigue resonant in their voice. The Ruam and spirits in the group both speak of relaxation and joke about inevitable maintenance work.*

- Introduction to the Guild Grand Master

- *Looking at the various characters that entered the Amber Nest, you see one figure nearby that stands out among the rest. A spirit sits apart from the rest of the group he'd arrived with and quietly finishes a discussion about guild administration. His tone is more measured than the rest of the spirits in the Nest, elaborating with tranquility and well-paced complexity. As the Ruam he was speaking with steps away, you politely move to take his place, introducing yourself and explaining your questions as you sit down.*
- *"I see," he answers with a grin and a nod. "I am Khea, Grand Master of the Pathlayers, and pleased to make your acquaintance."*

- Personal duties and other typical guild master duties

- *You inquire simply about the work that falls to a guild grand master. "Well," he starts, a thoughtful expression spreading onto his face, "it isn't all delegation. Most of the interactions between my guild and the rest are managed by me. It's my authority to, for example, settle agreements over what projects fall to my guild instead of others, decide what maintenance and material support we provide - the things that pull all of the guilds together. I'm also my guild's prime representative at the council, where more big-picture decisions for Korios are raised."*

- Overview of the different guilds

- *As he talks about the guilds, you tilt your head. "There's a lot of guilds, I could understand the confusion," he continues before you can pose a question. "All fall into one of the three Orders - Industrialist's, Administrator's, and Guardian's - and while that is a convenient method of sorting it is not at all useful for truly understanding the guilds and how they interact. They vary wildly in age, specialty, and size, and in general the Orders are called for large decisions or projects that affect the future of Korios. Otherwise, work almost always falls to specific guilds."*

- Overview of the guild council and decision-making processes

- *On the subject of the Orders, you ask how decisions are made between guilds. His face contorts slightly, an emotion somewhere between dismay and consideration. "The guild council is composed of every guild leader, with three Order leaders as a kind of spokesperson for their Order. It's how we make cooperative decisions. Meetings are planned both on a scheduled basis and if the need arises, and every issue requires a two thirds majority to one answer to be resolved. It's Kainari*

*simplicity at its finest, but things have gotten conflicted before. It is not the most efficient part of the guild system."*

#### • Governance in Korios and its benefits and shortcomings

o *His hesitation catches your ears. You ask him what he thinks of Korios government. "Well, someone's got to keep track of everything. Keep the guilds from spending all day squabbling over efficient logistics," he chuckled heartily. "But I think it could be better. Its framework is demanding, and problems that don't fit easily into the system often halt it entirely. As well, having governance managed by the same spirits who are busying themselves with construction and design all the time can just be plain inconvenient."*

#### Introduction to off-duty builders

*Suddenly, Khea raises one of his paws and his eyes jolt open. "I've another conversation with another grand master to attend to," he stated hurriedly. "One that unfortunately takes me away from The Amber Nest. I've about told you all my guild can't anyway - you can find them on the other side of the cafe." He gestures his paw towards a group of Ruam and spirits as he stands up and cleans his place. "All the best," Khea wishes, nodding politely towards you and walking towards the door.*

- *Intrigued, you passively approach one of the less packed tables of joyful workers. Two spry-looking spirits and an older Ruam sit around a table, discussing the day's work between sips of juice. They look at you at first with confusion, but you explain your curiosity and they nod in understanding. You ask their names as you take a seat.*
- *"I am Loran. She is Meru, and he is Okor," The Ruam speaks, taking the initiative of introducing you. He gestures to each spirit as he says their name. Meru smiles and nods casually, and Okor waves his paw in a swift, energetic motion.*
- **Assignment of Project Tasks by Guild**
  - *With introductions sorted, you inquire what guild they're from. "The Pathlayers," Meru answers before putting her paw up matter-of-factly. "Names aren't much help. We work with the outdoor, public infrastructure that paves Korios. Projects are assigned to guilds based on what types of construction they'll require. A smaller building might only take the masonry guild, for example, while a larger one would be supplemented by supports from a carpentry guild."*
- **Builder interactions with Seil and the Baobab**

- *Idly, you wonder aloud how they might keep track of their designs. “We had to go to the Baobab to fill a gap in our archives last morning,” Okor responds swiftly. He twirls his paws around each other in thought as he talks. “Most of the plans, we keep around, but when we’re missing something we go to the Spirit Baobab and Seil in the city center. Their light archive goes all the way back to the beginnings of Korios, and they’re usually happy to help. At least, I think so. I’m not sure Seil knows how to express any emotion other than excitement,” he laughs, his jab at the spirit light clearly loving in nature.*
- **Personal struggles in the past**
  - *Trying to be polite, you ask how the day’s been treating Kainar. Loran answers first.*
  - *“It’s been relieving to me, although you’d be hard-pressed not to have noticed our rudely celebratory entrance,” Loran answers, looking accusatively at the spirits beside him. “For me, it’s a relief to be working again. I had an injury on a build site a few seasons back, was afraid I’d never be on construction again. Made a fortunately full recovery, though, and been feeling as good as ever.”*
  - *“Or so he claims,” Okor shoots back, looking at Loran with suspicion.*
  - *“I swear it’s true,” he defends with a laugh. “The others of the guild have refused to take their eye off me. It’s an honest, but very aggressive concern of theirs that I don’t take another injury.”*
  - *Okor gives Loran a concerned look. “You better not, we couldn’t have you end up like poor Darro.” With that the tone at the table immediately shifted from mere mention of that name, with Loran and Meru suddenly sporting more somber looks. Noticing your confusion Okor figures it necessary to give you a bit of context. “Not everything in Korios runs as smoothly as you might think,” he starts, looking visibly pained down at the table. “Darro, is a living reminder of that fact. He was an apprentice for the Potter’s Guild, a good lad. One day he was sent to evaluate the aqueduct for Ariben’s Extension, to bake a clay patch for a reported leak.”*
  - *He takes a pause to control his more frustrated thoughts before proceeding. “The guilds had known about the leak for some time at that point, but the responsibility of fixing it got bounced between them until it was too late. Eventually it came down to the Potter’s Guild to try to patch it as at least a temporary fix, but when Darro started his evaluation the leaking section collapsed under him. Mangled every limb on his body and just about killed the lad. He’s lucky to still be figuratively kicking, even if he won’t be kicking literally anytime soon.”*

- Meru interjects, her expression betraying a level of frustration that Okor tried to hold back. “Neither the Waterweavers nor the Mason’s Guild deemed the problem theirs for one skath dung reason or the other. They carried out their own **separate** evaluations, and passed it off to each other before it went to the Potter’s. Neither believed they’d messed up, and cared more about saving face than just fixing the cursed thing! That whole block was flooded, the entirety of Ariben’s went five days without flowing water, including sewage. It was a nightmare.” The table occupies themselves with their drinks, clearly trying not to dwell on the past.
- Types of projects that can be assigned
  - Attempting to continue the conversation, you ask what kind of projects they’ve seen or worked on. Loran answers with a thoughtful smile. “Anything in Korios that’s needed. Or want, if the demand is enough. The council is in charge of prioritizing what projects find their way to the guilds and when. New buildings are usually either purpose-built, such as with housing or social services, or as an empty shell for grocers, cafes, workshops, any kind of service. There’s public works for anything from water pumps to funeral homes as well.”
- Other jobs/responsibilities in Korios
  - “Of course, I’d never let anyone get away with thinking it’s all fresh new buildings,” Loran chuckled. “Nothing in Korios stays in one piece forever despite our best efforts. Many of the assignments that come through are repairs and cleanups, far less glamorous than the echoes of constant progress would have you believe. Until you actually get around to fixing it, a broken something is as good as nothing at all.”
  - “There are shopkeepers from the Administrator’s Order,” Meru picks up, to which Loran gives a conceding nod, “who manage the economy and assure everyone’s got somewhere to stock up. As well, there’s garrison members from the Guardian’s Order, who stand trained and at the ready to repel the dark hyenas from Korios’ walls, or one of a few other threats that could come someone’s way when they’re outside Korios.”
- Leaving The Amber Nest
  - As Meru finishes speaking, he leans his head to the left, gazing outside at the waning sun.
  - “I’m out of answers for you,” Meru continues with a sigh, “or at least out of energy. The other two need some rest as well. Despite all our progress, tomorrow sure isn’t a break,” she chuckled, Loran and Okor smirking along with her.
  - “It’s been good to meet you, though,” Loran politely added as the three stood up, pushing in their chairs and sorting their



*places. "Allowing us to indulge in a little self-description. I hope you find information to cure your curiosities, and best wishes."*

- *You nod and thank them for their well wishes as they leave The Amber Nest. You return to your place quietly, finishing your order and cleaning up before departing into the dusk streets of Korios.*

## Koriosan Views



### *Museum of Korios*

*For those looking to learn more about or entertain themselves in Kainar, no location is more universally-known than the Museum of Korios. It is the largest cultural welfare project in Kainar and one of the largest overall, among the walls of Korios and the Great Dam as cooperations between every guild in the city.*

*Its entrance is imposing to the surrounding smaller buildings that comprise most of Korios, though it keeps their design elements. You step through the doors, entering its strikingly large foyer. The walls are bare except for simplistic wood supports that run through the masonry. The presentation areas of the museum are separated into three sections; one covering how Korios came to be, another on memorable individuals and events from Korios, and the last on elements of normal life in Kainar.*

#### **Life of Kainar Exhibit**

*The right-most hallway of art is less rigid in structure than the rest of the museum. It winds and splits into various nooks for different topics. An introductory plaque stands in the archway, outlining that the following pieces are meant to detail the things that most influence daily life in Kainar. It warns that the situation changes often in the forest, and that the information depicted is likely never completely in date. Besides, it warns, there is no such thing as an average Koriosan.*

#### ● Overview of Zariza

- *The first mural etched into the wall depicts a massive black-scaled scorpion surrounded by her much smaller, yet still spirit-sized, children. They stand close together, Korios' definitive walls visible in the distance. The pose the larger scorpion takes is not aggressive, but even through the mural it instills respect into you.*
- *Writings underneath detail them as Zariza, a guardian of Kainar and mother figure to the scorpions. She is friendly to all in Kainar, providing for her children as they live peacefully in and around Korios. The caption notes in no uncertain terms that*

*showing aggression of any kind to Zariza's children is mandated against, and dangerous to one's well-being.*

- **Zariza's History with Spirits**

- *Being spread evenly across the prairies, Zariza and her children were one of the first other intelligent creatures that the spirits found. First contact almost led to aggression due to the naturally threatening appearance of the scorpions. Zariza was quick to intervene, replacing unease with mutual understanding as she explained her peaceful will. A truce was made, and finding allies in Kainar sent a wave of positivity through the spirits.*
- *Before the codification of Korios' government, some spirits found the scorpions as undesirable allies. Having been hurt and starved by Kainar's wilderness in the past, the idea of making allies with creatures they believed to be so close to it was unfavorable to them. Some took it upon themselves to show this anger to the scorpions. One confrontation led to a spirit conducting Spirit Ignition, and the fire it brought quickly grew to destroy several nearby buildings and a portion of the savannah. It promoted Korios' most powerful spirits to work out a stronger bond between the Baobab, its children, and Zariza.*
- *Mutual agreement was held strong between the spirits and scorpions. Their relationship set in stone over time, and by the time of Korios City's construction, they were welcome neighbors.*

- **Overview of the Dark Hyenas**

- *As you look further down the hall, a distinct blend of colors catches your eye. Most of the scenes in the museum are depicted during daytime in warm oranges and reds. This one, however, is covered in black, purples, and the occasional cold white of moonlight. You wander towards it and see a trio of dark hyenas, their fur as dark as their midnight surroundings. Their snarling jaws were swung open and their teeth fur-raisingly sharp, standing as large as the trees that surrounded them.*

- **Advice for handling the Dark Hyenas if encountered**

- *Underneath the mural is a vivid and frightening description of the dangers of Dark Hyenas. It opens by warning about their overwhelming size, conveying that fighting the Hyenas outside Korios is futile and often fatal. It advises to never go out at night to avoid encounters in the first place, or if one attacks during daytime as rarely happens, to show no resistance and return to Korios quickly. Most often, it states, the hyenas attack buildings before spirits, so abandoning structures quickly is the safest method of escape.*

- **Overview of wildlife from Kainar's regions**



- *A variety of creatures are depicted, all in or around a young tree in a field of green prairie grasses erupting from red soil. The animals vary in size, some seeming as small as your paw and others as big as two spirits. The caption states that Kainar is teeming with varied wildlife. A few are described in particular.*
- *The Katcha are a species of small rodents that live in burrows hidden throughout the plains. Each live within their own families, creating personal dens. If nearby another personal den, however, Katcha will often dig long connecting tunnels between family dens to form small packs of two or three families. They scavenge for fallen fruit and leftovers on the savannah floor, able to quickly hide in trees or underbrush if threatened.*
- *Skath are massive wildebeest that roam around Kainar in large herds. Their large, front-facing horns make them dangerous to be in the way of, but they are universally herbivores. Herds of skath travel the wide plains in search of fresh grasses and grains to graze, using their overwhelming size and numbers to fight potential predators.*
- *Skeenils are a race of small, six-legged insects that live inside fallen trees. They rely on them for everything, from building networks of tiny paths and rooms in their trunk to feeding on their bark. Due to this, they are infamously defendensive of them, swarming and biting any creature that disturbs their home. Their bites cause mild itching and pain that can be temporarily debilitating in large quantities.*
- **Overview of the Leenis**
  - *This mural depicts a group of brown, short-furred creatures grinning, holding one another close. Their tails raise high behind them and their presence exudes joy and familiarity. The description calls them the Leenis, another of Kainar's native species.*
  - *While the spirits and Leenis were aware of one another before Korios's construction, their relationship deepened during it, with the Leenis living among them as equals and welcome guests. The Leenis typically fulfilled more operational roles during Korios' construction, assuring that its vital services and growing economy remained available even during intense construction. With their efforts, everyone in Korios had access to a place to sleep and food to eat throughout its establishment and unto today.*
- **Memories of Korios Exhibit**
  - *A large rotunda opens up directly opposite the doors into the museum. As you enter, you see its glass dome roof above you, easily the most flamboyant piece of the museum. Its plaque, in the direct center of the room, reads that the exhibit is filled with murals depicting Korios' notable individuals and events. Its goal*

*is to highlight the most important pieces of Koriosan history rather than simply the most well-known. Despite that, it still represents only a piece of the efforts that contributed to Korios' success, the plaque clarifies.*

- The Baobab's greatest projects

- *An eye-catching depiction of the Baobab stretches across the left end of the rotunda wall. Surrounding its tall, smooth trunk are two distinct murals. One shows Korios' wall under construction, its skeleton stretching upwards. The other is water pouring from the Great Dam. The two constructions can only be seen at once if the viewer takes a step back, giving a taste of their immensity.*
- *Underneath the mural is a caption detailing the walls of Korios and the Great Dam as the Spirit Baobab's "Great Projects," with their staggeringly complex plans created partially by and stored within the lineage of Spirit Baobabs. They are, it describes, essential figures to both the stability and culture of Kainar.*

- Famous Guild Members

- *A Ruam and a Leenis are depicted on two thin plates here. They are slightly larger than life size and have markings which make it clear these are individuals rather than generic depictions of the two species.*
- *The Ruam stands with his arms wide in front of a complex network of aqueduct channels, facing the viewer with a warm smile and expectant gaze. The caption reads that Rokoh Mariana, better known as Roc, was the first guild master of the Waterweavers. His efforts were responsible for its establishment as a guild and he designed much of the waterways that bring life to Korios. As an individual, Roc was known for his ability to memorize designs which overwhelmed most others, even when written down, as well as his encouraging personality that led the frontier of engineering.*
- *The Leenis is depicted with her arms crossed, a smirk on her face. Behind her is the internal skeleton of a freshly-completed building, wooden supports jutting out from the walls and clay freshly dried. The description explains that her greatest work was developing a series of standard and easily-modifiable plans for new buildings. These "blank boxes" rapidly accelerated Korios' development and allowed for quick and consistent maintenance via a system of replaceable parts. Her logical and down-to-earth personality made her understood easily by everyone in Kainar, regardless of their engineering experience. She remains an inspiration for Leenis who seek to become experienced industrialists.*

- History of the Light Ceremonies

- *Here, you can see a breathtaking depiction of Korios city from within. Extending above both the inner walls which surround the Baobab and the outer walls of Korios is a massive wall of fire, blocking vision beyond them. A tower of smoke rises into the sky above both, creating an otherworldly column that bends with the wind. The fire is strikingly orange in Seil's shade and champions the entire mural, its brightness clear even through the depiction. The caption explains that the Baobab's light ceremonies were once far less tamed and contained a display of fire. As Korios was built around the Spirit Tree, Seil refined their power into a barrier. The pillars of fire are precisely placed to not harm Korios city and its surroundings, but to dissuade the Dark Hyenas and/or bring rain during a drought using the clouds formed by the smoke.*
- Tributes to Past Baobab transformers
  - *At the right-most end of the rotunda stands a wall of clean-cut dull-orange stone. It is many times wider than you and twice as tall, and upon it are etched letters large enough to be legible whether they are at the top of the wall or the bottom. Its presence dominates the space around it, drawing in attention from the entire rotunda.*
  - *It is covered in names. Each name is etched with wide strokes to assure it can be read from any angle, and are filled in with white pigment to stand out against the unremarkable rock. They appear to be listed from the top left, given they end part of the way through a column. The space below the names is frighteningly blank.*
  - *Just in front of the wall - and undeniably dwarfed by it - is a detailed model of Korios carved with care from wood, with the only notable difference being the absence of the Spirit Baobab in the center.*
- Other Culturally Significant Events
  - Wall breach, order schism, great migration
- **History of Korios Exhibit**
  - *The left-most exhibit is covered in murals which all run together in sequence, creating a kind of timeline that starts on the left wall of the entrance and ends on the right wall. The introductory plaque reads that this is the oldest of the museum's sections, created during its construction. It covers the spirit's history Kainar that led to the construction of Korios City.*
- The Baobab's First Children
  - *This mural depicts white leaves raining down from the Spirit Baobab among a crowd of fascinated-looking young spirits. Kainar's red soils seem strangely barren as not a single construction is shown, unlike most murals involving Kainari spirits. The caption reads:*

*“The first spirits of the Baobab were born into an environment that soon proved barren without adequate experience in scavenging the landscape. While the fall and summer were generous enough to allow them to scrape by, the longer nights of the winter were devastating when coupled with the growing threat of Dark Hyenas. They had learned of the spirits and found their settlements offensive to the order of nature, decimating any that they saw.”*

- **Korios’s Beginnings**

- *Another mural displays a group of campfires and rudimentary shelters surrounding the base of the Spirit Baobab. The plaque below gives context.*

*“It is from this humble settlement that Korios City would later be founded. With more experience gained over the seasons, spirits became capable of harvesting the food they needed to support a larger population, and no longer had the need to spread out across the plains. They relied on the light of Seil to protect them, rather than hiding from the Dark Hyenas. This was a gambit which initially seemed foolish but proved effective and created the first permanent settlement.”*

- **Meeting the Ruam**

- *The next mural in line is of a canyon that stretches deep into the ground, filled with buildings, steps, ladders, and contraptions. The structures are both built over the air and burrowed into the rock. Just outside it, a generic Kainari spirit with wide eyes looks at a similarly-surprised Ruam. Neither seem aggressive, and the description notes first contact between the two species as peaceful. The first spirits to find the Ruam were in the midst of working on what would become Korios, travelling far from the Spirit Baobab to find adequate resources.*
- *After clearing some initial confusion regarding what the spirits were, the two races were able to relay their goodwill to one another. The spirits explained their settlement, and the Ruam stated that they would soon need to move from their canyon city to support a growing population. The two species agreed to cooperate, with the Ruam sharing their building experience to help construct Korios City, which they would move into.*

- **Incorporation of Korios City**

- *A group of grown spirits stand around the base of the Baobab in this mural. They seem to be in a discussion, gesturing with their paws to one another, and between them is an image of Seil projected from the top of the Spirit Tree. Around them are the*

*beginnings of the internal wall of Korios that surrounds the Baobab.*

- *This caption describes that, as more species and individuals moved into the settlement around the Baobab, the spirits within began seeking to better organize their efforts. They gathered at the Baobab to discuss their plans, eventually involving Seil and the Spirit Baobab in the conversation. The resolutions they made created the structure of government that the guilds are created by, as well as the name of Korios City.*
- *Another caption next to the mural provides a convenient summary of this power structure for potential outsiders. All power in the city is derived from the guilds. When a new guild is requested, the internally elected grand masters representing each guild are called to council to debate and then vote. Each grand master votes within their order, with the majority vote representing the order as a whole. If two of the three orders votes in favor of the new guild then it is created. In turn, these guilds create order in Korios.*
- *Both Seil and the Spirit Baobab can call for a vote on anything, including to create a proposed guild, and they function as tiebreakers if an Order is split down the middle. A vote can also be called by the demand of Guild Grandmasters.*
- **Construction of the Great Dam and Korios' expansions**
  - *The next mural in the timeline depicts Ruam and spirits working together to lay the foundations for Korios' wall, digging trenches and carrying in supports. According to the caption, with the Ruam's assistance, Korios' rate of completion increased tremendously, and the outer walls were soon underway.*
  - *The Ruam were essential to the successful construction of the Great Dam. Their knowledge of the immense power of water and the various problems that it introduces to a construction assured it stood resolute in the face of various engineering challenges and natural disasters.*
- **Struggles with the Hyenas and the defense of Korios**
  - *Next, this mural depicts spirits and Ruam struggling to repel a dark hyena assailing early Korios during its construction. They utilize spears and bows, raining projectiles down from atop the wall as the hyena claws into it, desperately trying to lash upwards in response.*
  - *The caption reads:*

*As the walls of Korios were constructed, the Dark Hyenas became more ferocious than they ever previously had been. Korios' construction was growing to be an offense too large for the Hyenas to bear, destroying what they believed to be the order of nature. The walls were symbolic of the City's*

*completion, and efforts were doubled to stop their construction. Many nights devolved into desperate defense of the City by anyone nearby that could brandish fire against the Hyenas, and this inefficiency led to the creation of the Guardian's order.*

*Even after the walls were finished, the Hyenas continued their assault, coming in groups to lay siege to the city or dig into its walls. Together, the spirits and Ruam worked together to invent and deploy mass-fire strategies such as long bonfires to ward the Hyenas out. Attacks declined over time and no Hyena has been spotted from the walls in several seasons since writing. The fate or current plans of the Hyenas is unknown, and the Guardian's order remains on persistent watch.*

- **Creation of the guilds and events leading up to today**
  - *The last mural in the timeline is a bird's eye view of Korios as it was when the exhibit was created. From its perspective, the countless homes and lives sandwiched between the inner and outer walls of Korios seem almost like an afterthought when juxtaposed against the monumental feats of engineering running around and through the city.*
  - *Its caption reads that, as orders were founded for defense and construction, Korios began to stabilize, from a conglomerate settlement in constant struggle, to a more stable and defined city. The guild council helped this as well, giving every citizen with the experience to join a guild a voice in the city's operation. As security brought development, the two orders were soon joined by the Administrator's Order, and the more active and defined economy it nurtured brought Korios into its most modern era.*
- **Leaving the Museum**
  - *Having viewed all that the Museum of Korios currently has to offer, you return to its foyer. The museum is completely empty now - save for you and the art. The hallways extend out, bathed in a much thinner light than when you entered. Your footsteps, however quiet, produce an echo in the empty rooms and hallways. With a short sigh, you exit the building to an open night sky twinkling with stars and edged slightly with the deep red of the sun over the horizon.*

## Altum

*A terrain coated in white snow glinting with radiant sunlight surrounds you distantly, yet completely. Gray mountains and spruce-filled valleys layer over one*



*another all the way to the horizon to create a skyline that towers over your immediate surroundings, as if you might fall into the earth beneath your hooves. You feel irrefutably small.*

*In such a grand forest, one is well-advised to know where they are going at all times, and how to get there. To learn more about the forest, you have picked two places to chart a careful course between. One of Altum's rare Inns is a promising place to meet native Altumi in their average lives, and a trail that runs through the mountain slopes is said to be littered with markers that detail the forest's history.*

*The Pine Hearth Inn is currently available. You can navigate to it using the pinned messages.*

### *Pine Hearth Inn*

*For native and newcomer alike, navigating Altum is a substantial ordeal. Even in its southernmost regions, the cold is bitter and snow falls often. During the daytime, the temperature is at least livable, at least in the more southern regions. During nighttime, however, attempting to sleep through the cold and wind is inadvisable without a strong camp or, better yet, a fully-enclosed house.*

*This is the appeal of the Pine Hearth, one of Altum's few inns. It stands in a snowy yet typically warm valley, a colorful field visible across it as the sun melts the snow each morning. News of its existence is fickle and travels only by word of mouth. The respite provided by the Hearth from the conditions of travel and field camping is rare in Altum, and as such it attracts any whose route passes by it.*

#### ● *Crossing Paths*

*As you approach the inn, the soft, scratchy sound of hooves trudging through snow to your left catches your attention. You turn your head to see a group of five spirits walking up the slope atop which the inn stands. They are close to one another, each clearly fatigued and bogged down with the weight of various bags and equipment.*

*They wave a paw as they approach, looking up at you from the slope they walk on. You walk towards them, and the spirit nearest the front hastens for a moment before slowing in front of you, extending a paw.*

*"I'm Takei," she says as you shake paws. "It's good to meet you. I suppose this is the most likely place to see a new face, just outside the inn."*

*She turns back to her group, gesturing towards them as they catch up.*

*"These are my friends and travelling party," she introduced. They nod as she does so.*

- Difficulties of travelling in Altum

*You introduce yourself and ask about the equipment they're carrying.*

*"Well, friendly terrain is sparse in Altum," she begins, gesturing towards the inn to suggest that you walk and talk.*

*"Sometimes, we can navigate through a nice valley, but much of the time we're stuck scrambling over rocky hills and mountain faces. For that, we employ some reliable tools," she explains as she taps on a sharp-edged pickaxe-like instrument on her pack. "Ice picks for leveraging a grip where there isn't one, pikes and hammers for creating handholds, and rope to tie onto them. It's certainly hard work, but with a lot of practice and vigilance it's possible to cross Altum's rough terrain over long distances.*

*"Depending on what's in our way, it's occasionally better to take long detours rather than travel what we call 'dense land' - areas which are small, in the literal sense, but take days to cross for the difficulty of doing so."*

- Relationships between Altumi settlements

*You make it to the cargo elevator beside the supports that hold the inn off the snowy ground. With a sigh of relief, Takei's party sets their equipment onto it and rings the bell attached to its rope, stepping off of it just before it ascends towards the inn. You inquire what they were travelling to that might require the heavy load.*

*"We're in the middle of a long expedition," she sighs.*

*"Connecting some very distant settlements on the corners of spirit presence in Altum and charting our route for future travellers. The Pine Hearth will be the nicest night we've had in awhile," she says with a laugh. "Even the most distant groups have to stay connected somehow. A lot of letters sent between friends and family, along with the occasional package."*

*"It can be a long way between the Altumi," a member of her group chimes in, nodding towards you, "Yet still, one group is always willing to help another in need. I have seen two who have never met embrace each other like family," he adds with a smile. "It is an odd kind of unifying warmth."*

- The role of Spirit Swoop

*The group turns away from the platform, strolling back towards the start of the inn's tall staircase in a disorganized manner. Takei shifts to your end of the crowd, and you take the opportunity to ask whether any light abilities contribute to their toolkit.*

*"Ah, our most important one," Takei answers with a grin. "Spirit Swoop is, in the physical sense, a simple thing - a membrane of light that a spirit summons between their arms and legs upon which they can catch the air. Despite this, it becomes an art in its complexity when you consider the winds and terrain of Altum along with it. With skillful use, crossing what would be days of distance on foot can take only an afternoon."*

*Glancing out towards the valley which the Pine Hearth Inn steadfastly overlooks, Takei smiles, "Outside of Altum, you'd probably think the only way to get a decent updraft was from a thermal. Truth is: the sky's a lot like the rivers and lakes, when it comes to how it flows." The Spirit gestures towards the cliffside, "Notice how the winds up here are blowing in towards us? The cliff deflects the air upwards, and we can use that for a spot of lift. Of course, we can also use a thermal like anyone else; you'd be surprised where you can find them." You wonder aloud whether their arms get tired, to which Takei responds with a laugh. "Of course! No spirit's solved the problem of aching arms, but that doesn't stop them from trying every now and again."*

- General Altumi survivalism

*You round the side of the inn and take the first steps up the wide flight of stairs up to the inn. A few groans echo from Takei's party as they gaze up the steps, at which Takei fails to stifle a chuckle.*

*"The Pine Hearth will be the best resting place we'll have all journey," she continues, seemingly both to explain to you and reassure her group. "Perhaps the most comfortable place I've rested in some time." You give some thought to that and ask Takei if their way of life is normal. She smirks a bit proudly before answering you. "Well of course not everyone lives the traveler's life, but even in the established settlements, staying stocked and safe takes constant vigilance. Every able individual needs to know how to carry out every basic task that might support themselves and their community. It is often difficult, but it makes us rather consistently resolute."*

- Size and Communication Between Areas

*As you continue to the top of the steps, you ask how Altum's communities might stay connected over the harsh terrain. Takei taps on her backpack.*

*"As I mentioned, a lot of letters are delivered by spirit courier," she reiterates. "Though, I suppose that isn't the complete story. The trambitas - large wooden horns that project their sound far across the mountains - can carry a message much faster than even the best gliders. Despite this, their rather limited vocabulary makes them more useful for sending warnings or calls to action than something like a conversation between individuals."*

*Takei looks up towards the doors of the Inn and sighs contentedly.*

*"Well, I've got to go speak with Ezi about getting me and my own a place to sleep for the night, and I ought to start sooner rather than later. I hope you find answers to your questions," she wishes. You wish her the same good fortune and she jogs up the last few steps to the doors of the Inn.*

- The Inn's architecture and decoration

*You surmount the stairs and reach the Inn's porch with a sigh of relief. As you take a moment to rest, the design of the inn catches your eye.*

*Relative to most of Altum's constructions, it is a large building, comparable to the size of a dining hall in a large settlement. A tall triangular frame extending upwards above its deep brown log walls. The roof is at a step angle and tiled with polished wooden boards. The two front doors are wide and look heavy, intricate curling designs carved into their hardwood surface.*

*You can spot a balcony on the right wall of the building as well, covered by a long and thick awning that extends out from the roof. A short chimney spews a column of grey smoke on the same side of the inn.*

*Takei's group beside you takes the first steps inside, and you follow them through the door. The inside of the building is cozily sequestered from the numbing atmosphere that permeates Altum's slopes. Deep browns of spruce logs and warm greys of cobblestone wall columns give your eyes a welcome break from the aggressive white of snow-covered fields. A fireplace warms the air, cutting through the chill of Altum that had settled into you.*

*A few chairs surround the fire, perhaps moved from somewhere else. Left from there are two tables with a set of chairs circling each*

*of them. On the far wall, a staircase leads up to a loft that hangs above your head. You peer upwards at it and spot a short hallway that leads to a few numbered doors.*

- **Types of Spirits and Behaviors**

*Various spirits and Michi are congregated inside as well. Takei's group follows her towards the innkeep, discussing plans for their stay. Another group is congregated near the campfire in their own quiet conversation. Beyond them and across a small counter, you can see a team working to sort Takei and her party's equipment into cubbies and boxes.*

*Near the left wall is another party sitting around one of the tables in the lobby. They have their packs sitting beside them and they eat a meal of berries, roots, and a few preserved meats from a plate in the center of the table.*

- **Relationship between the spirits and Michi**

*The Michi scattered in the inn have some striking differences from the spirits they sit amongst. They have thicker fur in shades of brown and a noticeably shorter tail. Despite this, you believe they might be indistinguishable from a far enough distance. The spirits behaved around them with the utmost comfort, as if they as well had fallen from the Spirit Spruce.*

- **View of Altum from within the Inn**

*As you wait for Takei to finish her business with the innkeep, you wander towards the center of the lobby. The balcony to your right provides a framed view of Altum from the relative height of the inn.*

*Slopes of radiant white snow and icy grey dominate the scene, layering over one another as they stretch into the distance. Between these are a few patches of verdant green fields speckled with colorful flowers. As the snow melts during midday in the warmer seasons, the plants that hide underneath are revealed, creating flower valleys in Altum's warmer regions. The Pine Hearth is situated in one of these valleys, and you can see that its blooming days are soon to come.*

- **The Task Board**

*On the same wall as the front door, on a shelf of small cubbies filled with small packages, leans a plate of smooth rock. It is uniformly dark except for the messages scrawled onto its surface by the soft white rocks that sit on the shelf next to it.*

*The board is clearly intended as a listing of tasks, both for locals to the area around the Pine Hearth and couriers travelling through. Some refer to packages left in the shelf below, either to be collected*

*or delivered. Others refer to incomplete wood collection or ask those who read to spread news of family gatherings. The handwriting and language varies as well, to the point where you can accurately tell the authors of the notes from each other based on their style and attitude.*

- The Vellum Writing

*Just beyond the chalkboard is a framed sheet of writing hung high on the wall of the Inn. It grabs your attention, as the minimalist decoration of the Inn is barren of anything else that could be reasonably hung on the wall. The writing itself is too small and antiquated in style for you to read, but the writing surface appears to be some kind of treated animal hide, and there is an inscription on a plate of metal set into the frame itself.*

*“Presented and Belonging to Ezi, for the Timber Hearth Inn, by Resia and Akatu the Spirits,” it reads, “The Fifth Vellum Writing; The Story of the Spruces, as Relayed by Mehri the Spirit.”*

- Talking to the Keep

*The sound of shuffling hooves catches your left ear. You flick your head to see Takei and her party talking amongst themselves as they walk towards the inn’s rooms, a key in Takei’s grip. As they walk away, you can see the small desk behind which the innkeep sits, sorting keys into cubbies and counting spirit light.*

*You approach with a polite nod, introducing yourself and asking about vacancies.*

*“We’re not that busy,” he laughs, his voice soft and even. “And I’m Ezi. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”*

- Uses and Users of the Inn

*As he continues to sort his desk, you ask about the inn’s current guests. He looks up in thought for a moment before answering.*

*“Well, around this time of year, we get the most sightseers to watch the blooming season, though admittedly the vast majority are still from Altum. More generally, we receive visitors for whom our inn is near their path of travel. Couriers are the most frequent, though gatherers and spirits moving permanently from one place to another are also usually around in small numbers.*

*Of course, the absolute purpose of the inn is to turn a profit, but beyond the bare minimum I need to stay fed, it’s meant to be a stronghold of recuperation. Even the most well-stocked of voyages can suffer great fatigue over their many days of wilderness camping. To have a comfortable and safe place to rest can relieve much suffering.”*



- Altum's exploratory spirits

*"The guests themselves are perhaps another story," Ezi continues with a friendly smirk. "Our patrons are rather polite, actually, and are among the more experienced when it comes to travelling in Altum. The longer the voyage, the more likely it is to pass by our doors, after all."*

*Education in practical Altumi wisdom and a great amount of time spent in the outdoors in one's early life make for a blend of talents that produces many skilled survivalists. The couriers may be a cut above the rest - especially with their gliding - but most every Altumi spirit could be counted on to survive a night in the wilderness alone."*

- Frontier and settlement culture.

*Ezi looks through the keys sorted on his desk, seemingly considering something about each.*

*"More or less, it's because all of Altum's settlements require their every spirit to contribute to survival efforts," he adds as he works. "When you're out on the edge of spirit-inhabited lands, it is a challenge to subsist. Spirits are known to develop a strong tenacity and build cultures in their many homes that, while they are varied, share their perseverance."*

- Stories, songs, and cultural development of Altum

*A sudden stirring of noise behind you catches Ezi's attention, and he looks up from his work for a moment to observe it. You turn your head to follow his gaze and see the spirits surrounding the campfire playing a tune. One has a small instrument made of metal pegs in their lap, the other two adding to the melody with deep humming.*

*"Ah, that finally made it here!" Ezi comments quietly, sounding pleasantly surprised. You turn your head back and give him a curious look.*

*"It doesn't sound as though it's the same spirits playing it. They must have picked it up," he continues. "I first heard that song on a trip I took away from the Hearth to visit family. Altumi carry their stories and songs as consistently as they do the head on their shoulders, and they can spread easily from group to group. The specific notes often change, but the underlying tune is easy to recognize."*

*Altumi spin them out of tales of their experiences - or, occasionally, their imagination - and they can spread to every corner of Altum from the right trade routes and settlements."*

*"Ah, but I'm keeping you from your room, aren't I?" Ezi suddenly starts as he finishes his organizing. You nod, extending a paw to exchange your currency for a key. He nods, smiles, and points you to your room. You return the parting gestures.*

*"A good night to you," he cheerfully wishes as you depart from his counter.*

*Turning to your right as you walk towards the back of the Inn, you look outside through the open balcony where the cargo lift leads once more. The sun is still above the mountains, but the first hints of sunset are beginning to fade in at the horizon. A few specks of light just beyond the balcony catch your eye, and you squint to see a group of spirits gliding upwards away from the Inn.*

*You gaze at them for as long as you can see them. Once they drift out of view, you retire to your room.*

#### ● The Inn's Room

*The decoration in your room is as conservative as the decoration outside it. A thick window with drawn shades is embedded into the wall opposite the door. A few steps forward and to your right, a wooden desk and chair are pushed against the wall. On the opposite side of the room, a small, soft-looking cot hangs between two walls, one pillow sitting in its center.*

*Looking at the cot makes your eyelids heavy. You set down what you brought on the desk and curl up inside it, quickly falling asleep.*

## The Alkuperu Trail

### *General Description:*

*In the rocky valleys that dominant Altum's central region sits a bare and jagged mountain, Mt. Alkuperu. It is an isolated place, and the site of a grand effort to chronicle the forest's first few generations. Traversing its curves and ascending to its broken peak has become something of a rite of passage for young Altum spirits looking to test their mettle, and the three-day hike up to the mountain summit is interspersed with markers that tell of the forest's grand history. So it is that spirits from all corners of Altum will*

*travel to Alkupera to learn of their heritage and prove their ability to survive in the wilderness alone, a necessary skill this far North. You choose to hike the trail...*

● 1st Marker: Pale Lights

- So it was that in that grey and frigid waste that the first spirits opened their eyes and gazed out over the dark tundra that was now their home. Weak and afraid they retreated to the safety of the Seid warmth and the original Spirit Spruce, a host with no concept of before and who simply always was. Even in those days Seid's luminous glory was bright and tender, but even their light was only a cinder flickering defiantly in that untamed wilderness. The wind and the wild closed in around them, the spirits were alone and unprepared in the land they found themselves in. Ushered onward by Seid's gentle assurances, the spirits stepped out into the groves surrounding the Spirit Spruce, a land just as densely wooded then as it is now. Despite being born in an early spring, the spirits could only barely subsist in their new home. They scavenged the forest floor in the meager warmth of day and retreated into the evergreens to escape the worst of the night's cold. It was a desperate existence, their strife would be unlike any known since, but soon the soft twinkle of pale lights in the nighttime trees would be seen from all corners of the horizon. It would bring their salvation.

● 2nd Marker: Guided by the First Children

- From across the Northern mountains they saw the lights of the forest's new inhabitants. Ever an ally of our kind they, the Saroks, came down from their mountains to help the spirits in their time of need. At first the arrival of the towering beings was met with fear and apprehension, and the Saroks had mistaken the spirits as creations of Draya - their revered protector of Altum's End, but it soon became apparent to the spirits that these creatures were guardians of the land. The Saroks taught them the ways of the forest and how to survive, for they were the forest's first children. They taught them how to hide themselves amongst the snow using their tails and fur. They helped them identify the edible roots, mosses, and berries from the poisonous. They raced them over mossy plains, up rocky hills, and through thick woods so that they may learn to

navigate the region. They told stories of the mighty dark wolves who could prove both helpful and dangerous, feathered hunters from the West, and communities of furred scavengers in the Southeast. They also spoke of Draya, a majestic being who protects the farthest reaches of the North under a shroud of cleansing polar light. Perhaps most importantly though, the Saroks warned them of the forest's dangers and put necessary fears in their hearts, for Altum was and always has been a hostile place. With their help, it would not take long before the spirits were able to do more than just subsist in their grove. Spurred by the stories they heard, they would soon dare to take the first steps far and away from the Seid's warmth.

- 3rd Marker: Setting Off into the Unknown
  - There were more of them now, and it was dawning on the spirits that soon they would need to venture deeper into the unknown regions of Altum if they were to find enough food for everyone. Brave gatherers set off South towards the mild tundra of Low Altum, hoping to find a rich harvest. At the same time, the strongest and most skilled spirits made their way North into the permanently ice covered valleys of High Altum in search of what lies beyond. In their missions, the spirits found that were not the only race inhabiting Altum.
- 4th Marker: Enclaves in the Darkness
  - The Pilus, whose treebound lodges were scattered throughout the Western region of High and Low Altum, were the first to make contact with the spirits. The skilled hunters had inhabited the continent long before the spirits arrived
  -